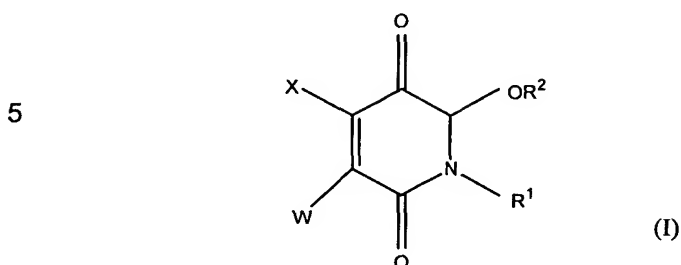


CLAIMS

1. A compound of the general formula



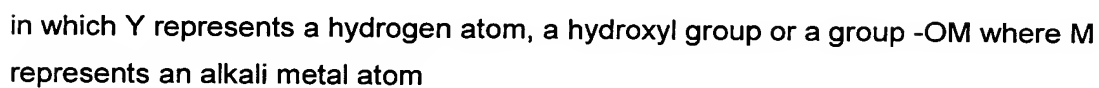
in which

- 10 R^1 represents a hydrogen atom or an optionally substituted alkyl, alkenyl, alkynyl, cycloalkyl, cycloalkenyl, aryl, aralkyl, heterocyclyl or heterocyclylalkyl group;
 R^2 represents a hydrogen atom or an optionally substituted alkyl, alkenyl, alkynyl, cycloalkyl, cycloalkenyl, aryl, aralkyl, acyl, heterocyclyl or heterocyclylalkyl group;
 and
 W and X each independently represents a hydrogen or halogen atom.

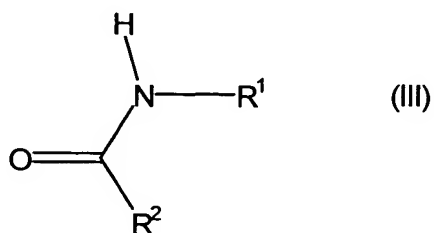
- 15 2. A compound according to claim 1 in which R^1 represents a C_{1-12} alkyl or C_{6-14} aryl group, each group being optionally substituted by one or more substituents selected from the group consisting of halogen atoms, nitro, cyano, hydroxyl, C_{1-4} alkyl, C_{1-4} haloalkyl, C_{1-4} alkoxy and C_{1-4} haloalkoxy groups.

- 20 3. A compound according to claim 1 in which R^2 represents a hydrogen atom or a C_{1-12} alkyl or C_{6-14} aryl group, each group being optionally substituted by one or more substituents selected from the group consisting of halogen atoms, nitro, cyano, hydroxyl, C_{1-4} alkyl, C_{1-4} haloalkyl, C_{1-4} alkoxy and C_{1-4} haloalkoxy groups.

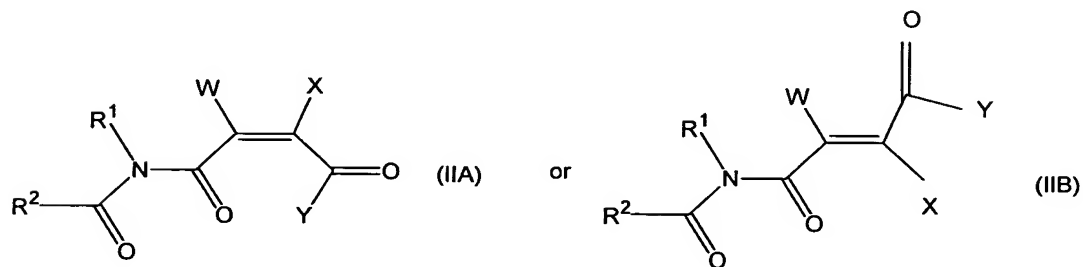
4. A compound according to claim 1 in which W and X each independently represents a hydrogen, chlorine or bromine atom.



with a base in the presence of a compound of the general formula



- 15 8. A compound of the general formula IIA or IIB



or a salt thereof, in which

R^1 represents a hydrogen atom or an optionally substituted alkyl, alkenyl, alkynyl, cycloalkyl, cycloalkenyl, aryl, aralkyl, heterocyclyl or heterocyclylalkyl group;

R^2 represents a hydrogen atom or an optionally substituted alkyl, alkenyl, alkynyl, cycloalkyl, cycloalkenyl, aryl, aralkyl, acyl, heterocyclyl or heterocyclylalkyl group;
 5 and

W and X each independently represents a hydrogen or halogen atom and

Y represents a hydrogen atom, a hydroxyl group or a group -OM where M represents an alkali metal atom,

10 with the proviso that, when R^1 , W and X all represent a hydrogen atom and Y represents a hydroxyl group, then R^2 is not hydrogen, methyl or chloromethyl.

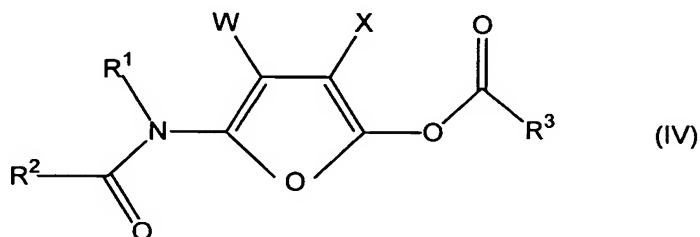
9. A compound according to claim 8 in which Y represents a hydrogen atom, a hydroxyl group or a group -OM where M represents a sodium or potassium atom.

10. A compound according to claim 8 in which R^1 represents a methyl group, R^2
 15 represents a hydrogen atom, W and X both represent a hydrogen atom or both represent a chlorine atom, and Y represents a hydroxyl group.

11. (Z)-2,3-dichloro-4-[N-formyl-N-methylamino]-4-oxo-but-2-enoic acid.

12. A process for the preparation of a compound according to claim 8, which comprises reacting with a base a compound of the general formula

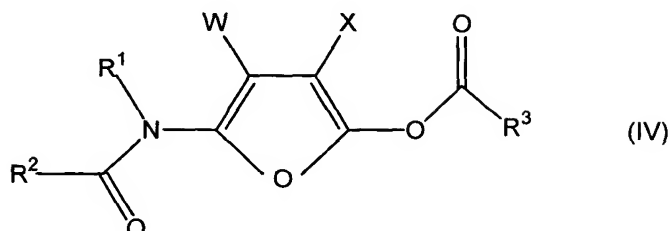
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in which R^3 represents an optionally substituted alkyl, aryl or aralkyl group.

25

13. A compound of the general formula IV



5

in which

R¹ represents a hydrogen atom or an optionally substituted alkyl, alkenyl, alkynyl, cycloalkyl, cycloalkenyl, aryl, aralkyl, heterocyclyl or heterocyclylalkyl group;

R² represents a hydrogen atom or an optionally substituted alkyl, alkenyl, alkynyl, cycloalkyl, cycloalkenyl, aryl, aralkyl, acyl, heterocyclyl or heterocyclylalkyl group; and

10

W and X each independently represents a hydrogen or halogen atom and

R³ represents an optionally substituted alkyl, aryl or aralkyl group.

14. A compound according to claim 13 in which R³ represents a C₁₋₆ alkyl group optionally substituted by one or more halogen atoms.

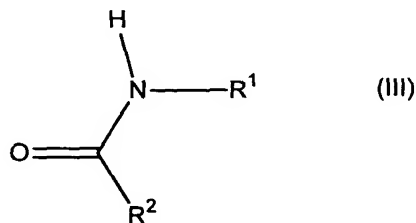
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15. A compound according to claim 13 in which R³ represents a chloromethyl or dichloromethyl group.

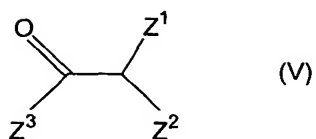
16. 5-[N-formyl-N-methylamino]-3,4-dichloro-2-furyl-2,2-dichloroacetate.

17. A process for the preparation of a compound according to claim 13, which comprises reacting a compound of the general formula

20



with a compound of the general formula



in which Z^1 and Z^2 each independently represents a hydrogen or halogen atom and
 5 Z^3 is a halogen atom.

18. A pharmaceutical composition comprising a carrier and one or more compounds according to claim 1, 8 or 13.
19. A method for treating proliferative diseases, microbial diseases or viral diseases comprising administering to a patient a therapeutically effective amount of a
 10 compound according to claim 1, 8 or 13.
20. A method according to claim 19 for inhibiting tumour growth.